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ABSTRACT

An overview of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education March 1979 clinic concerning management practices in teacher education inservice program operation is presented. Two Teacher Corps projects, one urban and one rural in setting, are used as the basis for discussion. Three areas of management practice are considered. The establishment of an effective communication system, the logistics and organizational details pertaining to inservice education efforts, and the design of a consistent decision-making policy for inservice programs are all major topics of concern and discussion. Copies of the description sheets for the Teacher Corps case studies and of the key questions and issues presented to clinic participants are appended. (LH)

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MANAGING INSERVICE: COMMUNICATION, DELIVERY, CONSIDERATIONS, AND DECISION-MAKING

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MANAGING INSERVICE: COMMUNICATION, DELIVERY, CONSIDERATIONS, AND DECISION-MAKING

On March 1, 1979, a clinic was held at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education. The purpose of this session was to discuss the management issues which affect inservice teacher education in urban and rural settings. This paper will serve as an overview of the content and activities of that session.

The clinic on "Managing Collaborative Inservice Education" dealt with three areas of management and was based on the findings of two Teacher Corps projects. Communication, delivery considerations, and decision-making were the three areas of management considered. The experiences of the Teacher Corps project at the University of South Carolina, an urban setting, and the Ohio University project which operated a rural program were used to provide relevance to the activities of the clinic.

Following introductory comments made by the presentors relative to inservice education, the urban and rural school district "Descriptors" were given to those in attendance at the session. (See appendix for a copy of the other materials utilized in the session.) These documents were read by all participants so that everyone would have a similar frame of reference for subsequent clinic activities.

Questions about the "Descriptors" were answered, and three additional sheets ("Communication", "Decision-Making", and "Delivery Considerations") were distributed to each person. Due to time constraints and the activity nature of the session, these sheets were employed on a small group basis.

Each group was given approximately seven minutes to respond to the information requested on each sheet. Therefore, the small group, activity-oriented portion of the clinic lasted approximately twenty minutes, with the three sheets being completed in the time period.

At the conclusion of the small group session, each person was given the "Key Questions" sheet relative to "Communication", "Decision-Making", and "Delivery Considerations" respectively. This afforded the participants an opportunity to compare their group's response with those of the presentors. The remainder of the clinic's thirty minutes was devoted to clarifying issues and responding to questions from those in attendance.

DESCRIPTION

The Session described in this paper operated in accordance with the principles outlined below. These principles were derived from the literature and from experience gleaned from years of operating inservice programs.

1. Teachers are more likely to benefit from inservice programs in which they can choose goals and activities as contrasted with programs in which the goals and activities are pre-planned for them.

2. Teachers are more likely to be influenced in school-based training programs than those taking place on college campuses.

3. The objectives of an inservice program should be specific teaching performances or outcomes.

4. Training programs that have different training experiences are more likely to accomplish their objectives than programs that have common activities required for all participants.

5. The teacher's personal goals/needs and those of the school should be congruent if training is to improve school system operations significantly.

6. Training related to job assignments is most effective if adequate time is provided within the current work schedule for each activity.[1]

1. "A Planning Process for Inservice Education", Teacher Corps Reports: Inservice Development Process. Western Washington State College.

A major objective of the clinic was to provide participants with an opportunity to solve problems related to management of inservice programs. Activities for the session were designed to be realistic, fast moving, and to engage the participants in feedback and discussion. Copies of the materials utilized at the clinic are presented at the end of this paper. Background data for the discussions and quasi-simulation were actual data from the two projects mentioned above.

Participants had two major tasks. The first involved determining the initial steps that must be undertaken if the school districts requested assistance from a College of Education. The second task to be accomplished included determining questions that must be responded to in developing a management system for an inservice teacher education program.

While the participants were required to indicate the initial steps that should be taken if a school district requested their services as the institution of higher education representatives, the writers feel that the first major step to be taken is the development of a needs assessment process to ascertain the needs of the recipients of the services to be offered. Numerous books and articles have been written about the subject of Needs Assessment, an since these exist and another session at this meeting was devoted to this topic, it will not be our intent to discuss Needs Assessment further in this paper.

Communication

An effective communication system is crucial to the success of any inservice program. Program designers responsible for developing and managing an inservice program will, most likely, consider the following questions related to communication:

1. What information should be disseminated?
2. To whom and to what agencies should information be disseminated?

3. What mediums should be used to disseminate information?

4. How often should information be disseminated?

5. What methods should be established to ensure two-way communication about program activities, events, and decision-making?

6. How can the effectiveness of the communication system be determined?

All persons affected by the program should have immediate access to information about program activities and events. Therefore, teachers, principals, college faculty, teacher organizations, and State Department of Education representatives should be among those receiving information about the program. The intended audience for the information should determine the type of information to be disseminated. The type of information being disseminated will help to make decisions about the medium to be utilized. The two projects upon which this clinic was based, found the development and implementation of a management plan to be the most successful element in communicating information about program goals, objectives, activities, events, and progress toward the achievement of the goals and objectives.

A structure should be designed to ensure that all role groups have procedures for and power to influence the program. In that regard, communication should be a two-way process.

Delivery Considerations

Quality inservice programs do not merely "happen". Rather, they are the outgrowth of careful and comprehensive planning.

Developers of inservice efforts must identify, and make provision for, the many elements (i.e., time, location, content, etc.) crucial to the success or failure of an inservice effort. The following is a list of these crucial issues:

1. What will be the objectives of the program?

2. Who will be the recipients of the training?

3. Will participation in the inservice be voluntary or "mandatory"?

4. Who will be responsible for coordinating the effort? Its promotion?

5. When - dates, day(s) of week, hour - will this program occur?

6. Where will the inservice endeavor take place?

7. What will be the content of the inservice?

8. What form(s) of instruction (i.e., courses, workshops, self-study) will be employed in this inservice?

9. How will the program provide for the different competencies of the individuals participating in the inservice?

10. Who will provide the instruction for the program?

11. Will the inservice be credit or non-credit bearing? If credit bearing, will it count toward a Master's degree program at your institution?

12. Will teachers receive any remuneration (stipends, free materials, reduced tuition, etc.) for participating in the program?

13. What will be the cost of the program? How will it be financed (grant, tuition, school district, or some combination of these?)?

14. While the inservice is occurring, how will it be monitored in order to assume that it is functioning properly?

The principles enumerated at the beginning of this paper provide directions for deciding how to address critical issues related to delivery considerations. Those issues for which the principles do not apply directly will be discussed briefly. For example, there is the issue of mandatory versus voluntary attendance of inservice activities.

There does not seem to be consensus among educational leaders regarding voluntary attendance in inservice activities. Many educators suggest that attendance should be voluntary. Others argue that is should be mandatory

since participants may not realize the value of an activity if they do not take the opportunity to participate. Participants in the two Teacher Corps projects mentioned in the paper were not required to attend training functions. However, the level of participation was extremely high. This level of participation is related to the fact that participants had significant input into decisions regarding goals, activities, and the selection of instructional personnel.

The issue dealing with credit and non-credit for inservice is related to incentives and motivation and should be decided locally. Credits can prove to be a viable incentive for participation. However, caution should be heeded when considering offering a master's degree as an incentive. What happens after teachers receive the degree? What incentives are available then? What is suggested here is that a combination of incentives and rewards be utilized. Thus, a reduction of tuition, stipends, free materials, and inservice credits should be explored as incentives for participation in an inservice program.

Teacher Corps projects discussed in this paper utilized a combination of methods and procedures to effectively monitor the programs of inservice they operated. The methods involved the use of a management plan which included program goals, objectives, activities to achieve each objective, and evaluation procedures for determining when each objective had been met. In addition, for each activity there was a suggested beginning and completion date, location of the activity, the person responsible for seeing that the activity was carried out, and resources spelled out. This document aided in preparing reports for agencies and individuals needing information about project's accomplishments toward achievement of goals and objectives.

A second important document utilized during the latter stage of development of one of the projects was a list of competencies to be achieved by teachers.

As teachers developed competencies through training or demonstrated that they possessed certain skills and knowledge of those competencies, the list was adjusted to indicate that the individual teacher no longer needed to be concerned with mastering those competencies. Attendance sheets for participation and workshop evaluation were compiled to provide information regarding the levels of participation and quality of the training exercises.

Decision-Making

Managing an inservice program requires that decision be made about communication, delivery considerations, and decision-making. The decision made about the design of the decision-making process will likely influence the degree of ownership of, and commitment to, the program by individual and groups affected by the program. Several critical issues must be addressed. They include, but are not limited to, the following:

a. Who should be involved in the decision-making process?

b. How can the decision-making process be designed to ensure collaborative decision-making?

c. What should be the role of the teacher organization?

d. Who should decide on the individuals and groups that will participate?

e. Have policies governing professional development been set or negotiated into collective bargaining contracts?

f. Are decision-making processes based on collaboration?

The decision-making processes established by the University of South Carolina and the Ohio University Teacher Corps projects were based on principles found in literature which suggest that all parties affected by the programs should be included in the decision-making process. These include the recipients (teachers), the deliverers (IHE), the certifiers (SDE), and administrators.

A decision-making (governance) structure should be established which contains input from college faculty, state department personnel, and school administrators. The specific percentage of involvement of each of the role groups can be worked out at the local level but care should be taken to ensure that there is parity in the decision-making and that it is indeed collaborative. Each role group should select the members that would represent it on the governance board. In the case of the teacher role group, it is not uncommon for the teacher organization to select the teacher to serve on such a decision-making structure.

Concluding Thoughts

In the 1980's, communities, legislators, and other groups will continue to demand quality instruction in our nation's schools. Inservice education can aid schools in meeting this expectation or it can make little significant change in its recipients. The effectiveness or ineffectiveness of inservice education will be determined, to a large degree, by the manner in which the issues discussed in this paper are dealt with.

APPENDIX

DESCRIPTOR

Urban School District

The area served by the district ranges from the rural, through the low-to-middle class suburban to the heavily populated urban (including the disadvantaged and high income professionals). The school district covers some 482 square miles of the county, including the city which has a population of 300,000 and an even larger area outside the city. The system employs approximately 3,353 persons including 1,810 teachers. Pupil-teacher ratios are approximately 25:1 in the 32 elementary schools, 22:1 in the 11 middle and junior high schools, and 21:1 in the 7 senior high schools.

There are 56 schools offering programs for kindergarten through grade 12. In 1977-78 the district had approximately 32,000 students and a budget of $36 million. The per pupil expenditure in the district for 1975-76 was $1,270 which was the highest in the state.

The school district has a well-organized central office staff which include a superintendent, an associate superintendent for instruction, two assistant superintendents (finance and special services). The associate superintendent supervises several instructional personnel including:

1. an assistant superintendent for the high schools
2. an assistant superintendent for middle schools
3. two assistant superintendents for elementary schools
4. several coordinators for various subject disciplines

Surveys of the perception of administrators (central office and principal), teachers, and community members indicated that all of the above role groups

felt that teachers needed to possess more effective classroom management skills. They felt that the University could provide the needed training.

The district wants and needs your help. It feels that an inservice program will help to increase the effectiveness of instructional personnel.

You decide to work with the district. You know that several major management issues must be faced prior to the implementation of an inservice program. These issues fall into three general categories: Communication, Delivery Consideration, and Decision-Making.

Attached you will find a sheet devoted to each of these three issues. Please identify the questions which must be raised and answered PRIOR to the implementation of an inservice program, if it is to become successful.

DESCRIPTOR

Rural School District

The Lincoln School District is a rural school district located in Ohio. The district encompasses an area of 281 square miles and is comprised of five elementary schools, one junior high school, and a high school. The district has an average pupil-teacher ratio of 30:1 at the elementary level and 24:1 at the secondary level, and its average per pupil expenditure is $829. The Lincoln School District was created in 1967 as a result of an externally mandated merger.

The school district is relatively poor economically. All of its elementary schools qualify for Title I funds, the physical facilities of the district need major repairs, and the unemployment rate within the community (where the district is located) is 9.7%, approximately the level where it has been for the past two years.

Based upon the perceptions of the administration, the district's students are deficient in reading ability. It is also their feeling that the majority of the teaching staff lacks the expertise necessary to provide effective reading instruction to the district's students.

The district has a relatively small administrative staff. In addition to principals, there is a Superintendent, and Assistant to the Superintendent, and a Supervisor of Instruction. The supervisor is responsible for instruction in every content area from kindergarten through twelfth grade in all of the district's schools.

The district wants and needs help. It feels that an inservice program will aid them in overcoming the reading problem within the school district and requests that your institution assists them in this effort.

You decide to work with this school district and conduct a needs assessment in the district. The needs assessment reveals the following:

1. 71% of the district's secondary school students are deficient in reading ability.
2. 64% of its elementary school students are reading below grade level.
3. 87% of the district's secondary teachers have never taken a reading course.
4. 62% of the elementary teachers have not taken a reading course since receipt of their bachelor's degree. For many, this has been several years.
5. The school district does not have a reading curriculum per se. The basal reading series used in the district "unofficially" serves in this capacity.

After identifying these needs, you know that several major management issues must be faced prior to the implementation of an inservice program. These issues fall into three general categories: Communication, Delivery Considerations, and Decision-Making.

Attached you will find a sheet devoted to each of these three issues. Please identify the questions which must be raised and answer PRIOR to the implementation of an inservice program, if it is to become successful.

COMMUNICATION

Communication

An effective communication system is crucial to the success of any inservice program. Individuals responsible for developing and managing an inservice program will, most likely, need to consider several Key questions related to Communication PRIOR to the inception of an inservice effort.

Please list below the Key questions which you would seek to answer relative to the Communication aspect of inservice education.

.....

DELIVERY CONSIDERATIONS

Delivery Considerations

Quality inservice programs do not merely "happen". Rather, they are the outgrowth of careful and comprehensive planning.

Developers of inservice efforts must identify, and make provision for, the many elements (i.e., time, location, content, etc.) which can play a crucial role in the success or failure of programs. This planning, of course, must occur PRIOR to the inception of an inservice program.

Please list below the Key questions which you would seek to answer relative to the Delivery Consideration facet of inservice education.

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DECISION-MAKING

Decision-Making

Managing an inservice program requires that decisions be made about many of the program's components. The decisions made about the design of the Decision-Making process will likely influence the degree of ownership of, and commitment to, the program by individuals and groups affected by the program. Several critical issues must be addressed PRIOR to the inception of an inservice effort.

Please list below the Key questions which you would seek to answer relative to the Decision-Making aspect of inservice education.

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COMMUNICATION - KEY QUESTIONS

1. What information should be disseminated?

2. To whom and to what agencies should information be disseminated?

3. What mediums should be used in order to disseminate information?

4. How often should information be disseminated?

5. What methods should be established in order to ensure two-way communications about program activities, events, and decision-making?

6. How can the effectiveness of the communication system be determined?

DELIVERY CONSIDERATIONS - KEY QUESTIONS

1. What will be the objectives of the program?
2. Who will be the recipients of the training?
3. Will participation in the inservice be voluntary or "mandatory"?
4. Who will be responsible for coordinating the effort? Its promotion?
5. When - dates, day(s) of week, hour - will this program occur?
6. Where will the inservice endeavor take place?
7. What will be the content of the inservice?
8. What form(s) of instruction (i.e., courses, workshops, self-study) will be employed in this inservice?
9. How will the program provide for the different competencies of the individuals participating in the inservice?
10. Who will provide the instruction for the program?
11. Will the inservice be credit or non-credit learning? If credit learning, will it count toward a Master's degree program(s) at your institution?
12. Will teachers receive any remuneration (stipends, free materials, reduced tuition, etc.) for participating in the program?
13. What will be the cost of the program? How will it be financed (grant, tuition, school district, or some combination of these)?
14. While the inservice is occurring, how will it be monitored in order to assume that it is functioning properly?

DECISION-MAKING - KEY QUESTIONS

1. Who should be involved in the decision-making process?

2. How can the decision-making process be designed to ensure collaborative decision-making?

3. What should be the role of the teacher organization in the decision-making process of the program?

4. Who should decide where individuals and groups will participate in the program?

5. Have policies governing professional development been set or negotiated into the school district's collective bargaining contract?

6. Are decision-making processes in the inservice program based on collaboration?